

# English Business Slang as a Component of the Business Language (in a Comparative Aspect with Russian Business Slang)

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**Abstract:** In business dealing in an English-speaking background, you can often find some abbreviations, acronyms, and special vocabulary exceptionally related to business and business life. The present article is concerned with the problem of the formation and use of English business slang in modern English business discourse in respect of the comparative aspect with Russian-language slang. We have analyzed the following main problems: theoretical aspects of the concept of "slang", special aspects of the study of this issue by modern linguists, the use of slang in business discourse. We have made conclusions about the compositional, structural, lexical, and semantic features of the business language, and also analyzed the role of English business slang.

**Keywords:** Business slang, linguistics, ethnicity, set expression, business discourse, business communication.

## INTRODUCTION

The multifaceted problem of the relationship between culture and language is one of the main problems in modern linguistics. Although there is a discordance of approach to language and culture relations, the view that language is part of the culture of the people is practically not objected by linguists. The modern world is the flourishing of international cooperation, and English is an instrument of communication for businessmen in the world. Effective professional communication is the cornerstone of successful activity. Obviously, over the centuries-old history of trade and market relations and the English language diffusion, a special group of expressions has emerged in the language, which we now know as the "business discourse". Business language learning not only facilitates the process of entering the essence of the professional business sphere but also provides additional insight into the English language. Consider the theoretical aspects of the concepts of "slang", "business slang" and its frequent use in the professional sphere.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The main methods of studying business slang and their expressions are translation and comparison.

This investigation has been undertaken to establish the interlingual equivalents of various languages in the field of business discourse. These expressions were not restricted to thematically or chronologically. Slang definitions were analyzed using the method of continuous selection. The methods used in the work

are as follows: descriptive (methods of observation, comparison, definitive analysis, generalization, interpretation), comparative, component, translation commentary.

In this paper, we point out to the need to take into account not only lexical units and terms within the framework of business discourse, but also the national color of the language, its cultural mentality of colloquial speech, as well as the specifics of business negotiations, written business communication, and business style in the context of political multipolarity of business.

Considering the linguistic characteristics of business slang, we believe it necessary to note that there is no single definition of the concept of "slang". The concept of "slang" is mixed with such concepts as "dialecticism", "jargonism", "vulgarism", "colloquial speech", "vernacular" (Kalita, 2013). Encyclopedic dictionaries contain quite different interpretations of the concepts of "slang", "business slang" in different cultures. Slang is a constantly changing use and definition of words in an informal conversation, often using references as a means of comparison or demonstrating similarities, so, according to E. Mattiello, it consists of a vocabulary of non-standard words and phrases in a given language (Mattiello, 2008).

Many linguists hold to the opinion that jargon and slang are the same. So, in the online dictionary *Terms and Concepts of Linguistics. General Linguistics. Sociolinguistics. Reference Dictionary* the authors point out that slang is "a group of jargon used in the context of informal communication, making up a layer of colloquial vocabulary" (Terms and Notions of Linguistics. General Linguistics. Sociolinguistics). The

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compilers of the *Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary* believe that “slang” is “the same as jargon (in Russian literature mainly concerning English-speaking countries)” and “a set of jargons, making up a layer of colloquial vocabulary that reflects an irreverent and presumptuous, sometimes humorous attitude to the topic of conversation. It is used mainly within the context of informal communication...” In their judgment, “the widespread use of slang makes spoken language abusive and contradicts the standards and culture of speech. Distinguishing between slang and substandard speech is a difficult task of lexicology and lexicography because slang differs only in that it has arisen in particular social groups, sometimes very wide (the youth)” (*Linguistic Encyclopedia. International edition*). The authors of the *Oxford Encyclopedia Peoples and Cultures* attribute slang to a variety of “spoken language (jargon), restricted to certain age, professional, social or ethnic groups, for example, adolescents, workers, etc.” (*Linguistic Encyclopedia. International edition*).

There is another opinion that slang is an open group, the words for which are drawn from jargonism, from the usually controlled vocabulary and, after taking on new meanings, become widely used. The *New Explanatory Dictionary of Derivations of the Russian Language (New Explanatory Dictionary of Word Formations of the Russian Language.)* understands by the slang “the totality of words and expressions used by representatives of particular groups, professions, etc. and constituting a layer of colloquial vocabulary that does not correspond to the standards of the literary language (usually regarding English-speaking countries)”, etc. According to Dumas B.K., Lighter J. “It replaces “a well-known conventional synonym.” This is done primarily to escape embarrassment caused by the conventional synonym or embarrassment or annoyance caused by having to elaborate further” (Dumas, & Lighter, 1978).

These definitions indicate that slang is used everywhere without social, age, and professional restrictions. This group of words is used by a particular group only in a narrow circle of people united by one profession, occupation, position in society. Now in linguistics, they stay up to date with the rapid emerging of new words that can be attributed to non-standard vocabulary, dictionaries began to be added and updated with new words, expressions. Increasingly, instead of “jargons”, this layer of vocabulary is called “slang words”.

Different opinions suggest that this huge layer of vocabulary is not well understood and is constantly changing.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Many words and phrases, which began to exist as slang, are now firmly entrenched in the literary language. Instead of colloquial expressions, slang is being actively used by educated people, representatives of a certain age, or a professional group, in their speech. Often this just emphasizes people’s belonging to a certain group. Especially in recent years, of current importance is business English – the language of official documents, business communication, correspondence, etc. Specialists speak of the existence of a particular variant, or the dialect of the English language – Business English. Officials and managers, lawyers and marketers, translators and secretaries of firms that work in various fields, are increasingly experiencing an urgent need for a good level of proficiency in Business English.

Today, without business correspondence, it is impossible to imagine the activities of any organization. It is obvious that competent communication skills for a good specialist are of particular importance and mean more than a simple achievement of the goal of oral or written communication. Official letters are the most important communication channels that require compliance with certain rules established by tradition or determined by the specifics of the form of communication itself. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that these rules have their characteristics in different language groups. So, for example, the form of a business letter will differ in some details not only depending on whether it is written in English or Russian, but also American or British variants of English.

The most basic and most common regional English variants when conducting business correspondence with foreign partners are British and American. Some words of American and British English are written completely differently, although they mean the same thing. Each of the variants has its characteristics of pronunciation, grammar, and writing. The vocabulary of the regional variants is also different.

Another important point in writing a business letter is a lexical constituent part. The vocabulary of the business style of the English language, and, consequently, of business correspondence, is

significantly different from the vocabulary of spoken English. In business English, it is customary to use a large number of special vocabulary and terms, cliches, abbreviations. Besides, business slang is allowed for use in business English. Consider the vocabulary that is found in business correspondence, for example, office slang vocabulary:

*cubes* – a partitioned-off area in an office containing a desk; a cubicle; *clock in/out* – register one's arrival at (or departure from) work (to show what time you arrived - left); *deadwood* – people that are no longer useful or productive; *bean counter* – an accountant or bureaucrat; *fat cat* – a wealthy and powerful person, especially a businessman or politician, money bag; *acluistic* – no telling.

It is worth noting that the use of professional slang in the spoken business language is appropriate among colleagues only in communication. The exception is the words and phrases that have deeply embedded in the lexicon of employees of a company and are recognized as the norm.

Besides, American business slang includes words and phrases such as:

*buddy* – a close friend especially of long-standing; *man* – a guy; *gotta* – 'have to' or 'must', (I've got to go = I gotta go); *gonna* – going to (I am going = I gonna); *Jee!* – short for 'Jesus'. Oh my God!; *Bingo!* – It's all over!; *cops* – policemen, *ace* – a sidekick; *drop a line* – to write; *eager beaver* – a very hard-working person; *goof off* – to spend their time doing nothing, when they should be working.

Business slang cannot be used in business correspondence, especially this rule applies to strictly official traditional paper letters. Slang is permissible in informal communication in spoken language, in live chats, in informal friendly correspondence. When writing business letters, it is worth remembering that many expressions with the verb *get* are substandard, conversational. Such expressions should be replaced with synonyms from the middle register, for example:

*get a boost (coll.)* - to boost (general) - encourage (something) to increase or improve;

*get behind (coll.)* - fall behind (general) – fail to keep up with one's competitors;

*get the ax/shoot (coll.)* - to be fired/dismissed/excluded (general) – be charged from employment or office.

It appears impossible not to single out a group of English business slang for the concepts of "leadership", which characterizes a person's position in business, cooperation, and the process of information interchange. For example the Russian variant of the expression "большая шишка" has many correspondences in the English business discourse: "a big cheese", "a big gun", "a big shot u a big wheel"; "an upper hand" denoting "someone having a lot of power or influence in his position"; "to play hardball" – to be achievement-oriented by taking much harder line; to do all that one can to win (Pashchenko, 2018).

However, there are several expressions that no longer slang, they have become generally used. For example, the expressions, such as:

*brain drain* – emigration of highly qualified people from a particular country; *dark horse* – people know very little about them; *fall asleep* – to go to sleep; *fall behind* – fail to keep up with one's competitors; *traffic jam* – road traffic at or near a standstill; *feel sorry for smb* – to feel pity for somebody; *rat race* – an exhausting, competitive routine; *red-tape* – bureaucracy, bureaucratic runaround; *to catch a cold with the meaning "to lose money on the deal"* (Cowie, & Mackin, 1991., Cowie, 1991).

These expressions are possible in personal business correspondence and internal business correspondence (unofficial). Nevertheless, such expressions should not be abused.

Especially popular in Business English are expressions from the sphere of economic relations, the author of the classification of which is V. A. Ponomarenko (Ponomarenko, 2007):

*sail close to the wind* – verge on indecency, dishonesty, or disaster; *the butter-and-egg man* – a rich provincial who throws away handfuls of money in a big city; *battle of the brands* – rivalry on the market between brands; *teetering on*

*the edge – on the verge of bankruptcy; bury the hatchet – end a quarrel or conflict and become friendly; bull-bull – people who buy shares in expectation of a price rise; to catch a cold – to lose money on the deal; a big cheese, a big gun, a big shot – Someone who has a very important job or position; wear and tear – a change that is caused to something when it is being used normally.; cut-throat prices – exorbitant prices; free astray – supplying free of charge goods lost in transmit; to play hardball – to take a tough line with; dirt cheap – very cheaply; an angel investor – an informal investor; have a thin time – have an unpleasant period in business; buy a pig in a poke – to buy without hesitation; splash out on – mispend money; cooking – forgery, falsification; walk the talk – make good on the promise; fall from grace – to turn out to be unclaimed; pinch and scrape – to make all possible economies; ring hollow – not seem to be true or genuine; white cash – legal payment in cash; on an even keel – functioning normally after a period of difficulty; just around the corner – near, on the way, etc.*

Russian business slang adopts a lot of borrowings from English-speaking culture. For example, *“Бэк офису нужно придерживаться установленных фронт офисом дедлайнов, чтобы получить положительный фидбек от клиентов”*. This is a conspicuous example of active use of English words. Let us analyze the constituent parts of the sentence:

*“бэк-офис”* from English back (towards the rear, in the opposite direction) office has the following meaning – “a department”, that is, a department providing administrative services in business;

*“фронт-офис”* from the English front (front-end, facade, fore) office (офис), which means “management office”. In general, this a designation for a group of subdivisions being responsible for direct work with customers;

*“дедлайн”* from English deadline in the meaning of “the latest time or date by which something is to be completed”;

*“фидбек”* from English feedback (return coupling, comments, response) denotes relations of a producer

with a consumer, receiving some information from a consumer in the form of comments, etc.

Also, one may encounter in business such expressions and words as *“бокс-офис”* (in the meaning of “pay desk”, “ticket office”), that is, the term *бокс-офис* denote a sum of money from the sale of something, for example of tickets;

*“вендинг”* from English noun vending (“sale of small items through slot machines”);

*“бизнес-коучинг”* from English business (business undertakings) coaching (training, teaching, instruction, tutoring services). Actual for now is coach sessions. These are methods of consulting, in the process of which a trainer (a coacher) instructs in how to achieve professional goals;

*“хеджирование”* from English noun hedging (insurance), formed from the verb to hedge (to insure against) (in the meaning of “to protect an investor against loss by in financial markets”);

*“девелопер”* from English noun developer (creator, maker, moulder), is formed from the verb to develop (to design, to engineer, to upgrade). The developer is a specialist, a businessman (a physical person), or a juridical person, engaged in the construction of immovables and organization of all accompanying processes;

*“девелопмент”* is entrepreneurship that deals with the building of property;

*«драфт»* from English noun draft (rough copy, sketch, project). This word can be used if it goes about a live document, contract, claim;

*“биг дил”* from English big deal. This word combination is used without translation, and it stands for a good bargain in business or a high-profile event;

As you can see, the spectrum of English business borrowings is quite wide and, of course, is not limited to the above.

## SUMMARY

Slang refers to the words that go beyond the normative literary language. Slang expressions have become synonymous with many words but remained unrecognized by the main part of intelligent cultural people until recently. However, business slang has already become the vocabulary of generally used

words of people in business groups. Insufficient knowledge of slang, the migration of slang words from one lexical group to another presents difficulties in studying them by linguists and compilation of dictionaries.

## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the nuances of using business English are reflected in the language. So, the slang of the English business discourse, as we see, is an integral part of the lexical stock and serves to denote various characteristics of individuals, relationships, communication, and processes. In addition, among business slang there are the expressions that are used in official documentation and are considered acceptable: “to make headway” (Russian “прокладывать путь, добиваться успеха” / to pave the way, achieve success), “at a premium” (Russian “быть в большом спросе, выше номинальной стоимости” / to be in great demand, above the usual or nominal price), “in arrears” (Russian “без авансовых платежей, с просрочкой” / without advance payments, money paid after the work done), “out-of-pocket” (Russian “наличные расчеты, за счет собственных средств” / cash payments, expenses which you pay out of your own money). In other words, slang in business speech is the same universal expressive means as in any other sphere. Having analyzed the English business slang as a component of the business language in respect to a comparative aspect with the Russian-language slang, we can conclude that, even though the business style requires condensation of presentation, clarity, and directness of speech, slang performs its functional and semantic function.

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